

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 157

By Johnson C

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize Grace Lutheran Church and its congregants on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this General Assembly should recognize those venerable religious institutions and their congregations who, through their unflagging capacity for love, dedication of spirit, and faith in God, enrich the lives of people in their communities; and

WHEREAS, the good people of Grace Lutheran Church in Clarksville, Tennessee, comprise one such congregation, and they are celebrating the church's fifty years of service to the Lord and their community this year; and

WHEREAS, on Sunday, March 29, 2009, Grace Lutheran will commemorate this milestone with a special service of thanksgiving which will include esteemed guest speaker Dr. Dale Meyer, President of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, and former speaker on the longest-running religious radio broadcast ever, *The Lutheran Hour*; and

WHEREAS, the history of Grace Lutheran Church begins in late 1958, before a formal congregation of Lutherans had been established in Clarksville; at the time, there was no Lutheran Church to be found between Paducah, Kentucky, and Nashville; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Harold Tessmann was called upon by the Western District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LC-MS) to establish a Lutheran congregation in that city, and his work was coordinated with a group of Army chaplains from nearby Fort Campbell, Kentucky; and

WHEREAS, on Sunday, October 5, 1958, forty-eight people met at Fort Campbell to begin a two-week canvassing effort, during which prospective families were contacted and organizers began to publicize their intentions; and

WHEREAS, Pastor Tessmann held the first Lutheran service in the area at the Clarksville Servicemen's Center on October 19 and the very next day, at Nashville's Concordia Lutheran Church, he was commissioned as Missionary-at-Large of the Western District of the LC-MS; and

WHEREAS, the fledgling congregation needed a home so negotiations were initiated with the Seventh Day Adventist Church on 784 North Second Street; having secured an agreement with that congregation, the Clarksville Lutherans held their first service at that location on November 2, 1958; and

WHEREAS, after all the congregation's adults had a chance to propose a name for their new church, a vote was held to make the final decision and, on December 7, the choice was made for Grace Lutheran Church; and

WHEREAS, on Easter Sunday, March 29, 1959, a charter membership service was held with 146 people in attendance; and

WHEREAS, the Voters Assembly extended a call to Pastor Tessmann to become the Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church on June 1, 1959, and, having accepted that call, he was installed on August 23 of that year; and

WHEREAS, the church purchased a large acreage on Madison Street and on March 6, 1960, a groundbreaking for a new church building was held; and

WHEREAS, many families from Hopkinsville, Kentucky, had been traveling to Clarksville to attend services, so Pastor Tessmann was authorized to serve yet another mission; within three years of her founding, Grace Lutheran Church had engendered another congregation, Hopkinsville's Faith Lutheran Church, which held her charter membership service on Sunday, January 7, 1962; and

WHEREAS, shortly after the tenth anniversary of Grace Lutheran, the congregation mourned the death of their beloved Pastor Tessmann, who passed away on All Saints Day, November 1, 1969; and

WHEREAS, the congregation extended a call to Pastor Donald Cherney, which he accepted, and he was installed on April 19, 1970; and

WHEREAS, the early 1970s saw significant growth at Grace Lutheran; because the church's ranks had grown to some four hundred baptized members and the need for more space was indeed pressing, renovations were planned for the existing church building and ground was broken for an education and fellowship wing in April of 1974; and

WHEREAS, following Pastor Cherney's departure, Pastor Robert Mader accepted the congregation's call to serve as Grace Lutheran Church's third pastor; he was installed on Reformation Sunday, October 29, 1978; and

WHEREAS, Pastor Mader encouraged a spirit of evangelism and outreach and, during his time at Grace, a number of the congregation's men chose to enter the pastoral ministry as a second career; and

WHEREAS, Pastor Mader accepted a call from a church in Johnson City in November 1991 and, for a roughly one year, Grace Lutheran relied on its daughter church, and Faith Lutheran's pastor, James Redmann; and

WHEREAS, Grace Lutheran Church installed Pastor Larry Peters on Sunday, January 17, 1993; and

WHEREAS, during the 1990s, fundraising efforts generated significant prosperity for Grace Lutheran; a new parking lot and lighting system, early improvements to the church's campus, were the first of the remarkable growth the decade would bring; and

WHEREAS, a church committee developed an ambitious five-year master plan; in 1996, the congregation initiated a capital campaign to pay off all debts and begin amassing funds for a new building, which would include a sanctuary, new classrooms, administrative offices, restrooms, a library, and a nursery; and

WHEREAS, the linchpin of the master plan was the Lutheran preschool; under the leadership of Director Elizabeth Hurlbut, Grace Lutheran Church was able to hold its first preschool classes in September of 2000; and

WHEREAS, with major construction completed, the new building was dedicated in October of 2001 and, in the following month, a beautiful sixty-plus pipe organ was installed, thus marking the absolute completion of an ambitious program of expansion; and

WHEREAS, since its earliest days in the borrowed rooms at Fort Campbell and the rented sanctuary on North Second Street, Grace Lutheran Church has served many spiritual seekers, and the church's phenomenal growth attests to the fact that Grace Lutheran has served its congregants well; and

WHEREAS, Grace Lutheran Church has stood on the rock-solid foundation of Christian belief, service, and love for fifty years, serving as a bastion of faith and outreach to the people of Clarksville and the surrounding area; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and congratulate Grace Lutheran Church on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary and offer our sincerest wishes for its continued success in the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.